

THE FORTY YELLOW MEN

By ALLAN STEPHENS
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"Don't imagine for an instant that I'm a quitter, or that I'm layin' down on you, Cap," complained Billy Joyce to his sunburnt vis-a-vis, simultaneously reaching for the bottle of Scotch, to which he helped himself sparingly.

"You know this, that I'm with you from the soda card to the turn, but the trouble is this—that I'm tired of bein' a piker, and unless a nice little piece of money turns up pretty quick, why, I'm goin' to turn over the box and give up the game."

Captain McBride, better known as "Cap" Pete, certain officials of the United States Government who guard its borders against the crossing of the Chinese coolie, leaned back in his chair, took a long pull at his cigar, and with his eyes on the occupants of a corner table, slowly exhaled the pungent smoke and looked at Billy thoughtfully.

"Now listen to me for a minute," he said.

"You know the Manuka sailed into Vancouver last week with over 600 Chinks aboard. The State Department and the Chinese Bureau are very properly all worked up over the heavy increase in Chinese emigration, because they're a pretty good idea where the Chinks evenin' come from."

Wiley and Doherty, of the Secret Service, met the Chinks at Vancouver, trailed the whole bunch to the plants at Ottawa and Toronto, and at the present time they're sitting at that corner table over there, keeping tabs on them."

"I've seen the guy with the mustache before," said Billy after a pause, during which he stealthily observed the pair of officers. "He's bumped into me all over town for the last two days."

"That's Doherty," returned Captain Pete. "He's one of Wiley's best operators."

"Where are the Chinks booked for, and who gets 'em?" asked Billy.

"I'm just coming to that," murmured Captain Pete. "Three hundred and twenty of them are for you and your Uncle Dudley, and the Six Companies have offered me three hundred dollars a head to O. D. at New York city."

"Forty-six thousand bucks," reluctantly whistled Billy after mental calculation. "But why the three centuries per head? We never got more than two hundred before, except by way of Vera Cruz."

"It's this way," answered Captain Pete. "This fellow Stark, who now has charge of the entire Border service, has told the boys to play fair. The Six Companies are getting desperate and are bound to get their countrymen at any price. Moy Chu and Charlie Sing have been up here twice to see me. They know that if anybody can beat Stark at this game, that I can, so they sent for this batch of Chinks, and I have had to send the ante to the border, and I'm goin' to get 'em over the line as soon as the gosses out of the Bay of Fundy."

"It's a big job," observed Billy. "It looks to me as if Uncle Sam'll call the turn on us this deal, but I'm with you, Cap, even if we get whipsawed and wind up at Moundsville; but I think you'll find it a heap easier to run down to Washington and have the Chinese Exclusion Act suspended for thirty days."

"Don't borrow trouble, Billy," pursued the captain, unmindful of his companion's sarcasm. "Slip over to the C. P. Depot, buy a ticket to St. John, N. B., down at 9:30 tonight, and put up at the Queen's. Pay no attention to Wiley or Doherty; they'll probably trail you to St. John. When you get there, wait for orders."

"Anything else, Cap?" questioned Billy as he swallowed the last of his highball.

"Why—er—yes," drawled the captain, slowly pushing back his chair. "Get me about two tons of rice to

be held subject to call, and if you are not too busy hunting up a poker game, buy about two hundred yards of straw matting for me."

To the critical eye of the sunburnt American who bought her at auction the bright spring morning, the Canadian fisherman's wife, Mrs. Aces, looked attractive. The former owner had been carried out to sea on an ice floe during a sealing expedition.

The panic of 1908 had touched good St. John, and ready money was a scarce article the morning of the auction when the shadow was glad indeed to accept a price for the schooner which in former days had been built for her dories and fishing gear alone.

Within a week after the sale of the Five Brothers, workmen swarmed over her. Painters, caulkers and riggers, spurred on by extra pay, were doing their best.

"Look to me like a hop joint," observed Billy Joyce to Captain McBride as they stood 'twixt decks and surveyed the series of bunks, neatly covered with matting.

"Can't sleep more than forty of the boys at once," remarked Captain Pete. "We'll have to make eight trips."

"What's the double wire between the two masts for?" queried Billy, gazing aloft out of the open hatchway.

"Ain't you told the Chinese Indians on 'em when you sail into New York harbor some evenin'?"

"You've been around enough to know the arias of a wireless outfit when you see them," returned the captain. "Have you seen the sleuths today?"

"Yes," laughed Billy. "Doherty's in the third-story window of the ship's cabin with a pair of binoculars, and Wiley's up town smillin' round the laundry where we have the first batch planted."

"Now, Billy, listen carefully," directed Captain Pete as he seated himself on the edge of a bunk. "The Five Brothers, with myself in command, sail next Saturday morning at high tide with forty yellow passengers. Our papers are regular and the Dominion officials are a rat where they can get 'em. They have special regulations for craft which carry passengers, so to get around them in a legal manner I have signed the first load on the ship's articles as cook, mess-boy and thirty-eight fishermen. We have our dories and regular fishing-gear, and I don't care what Doherty and Wiley think, we're not an official of the United States Government, and we will dare to board or molest us as long as we do not fish in certain waters, and provided, of course, that we keep outside the three-mile limit. You take the 7:45 for New York tonight. All I need on board is four able seamen that can keep their mouths shut. I've got 'em. You are trained to the city you know how to take the sleuths. Cut off that set of red braces that you call a mustache, change your front and have yourself fitted to a neat pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and then get in touch with a bright kid whose address I'll give you. He used to be a messenger boy around the Post Office, I staked him to the price of a scholar's cap, and he's just been graduated from one of the wireless operator schools."

Captain Pete produced a card and a small morocco-covered book, handed them to Billy and continued:

"Here's our code-book and 'Aces' address. The only two things for you to remember about the code—whenever the word 'goods' is mentioned, it means Chinks; and that wherever a locality is specified, such as 'Grand Manan,' 'Woods Hole,' 'Block Island' and so forth, it really means sixty nautical miles true south-east of the locality mentioned."

A carpenter approaching the pair

in search of a mislaid tool interrupted further confidential instructions at that time.

A few mornings later, soon after 8 o'clock, the Five Brothers was warped out of her dock. Her departure was attended by a crowd who winked knowingly at each other as the two-score Chinese "fishermen" boarded the schooner with their scanty belongings.

By 9 o'clock, customers of the Northwestern Telegraph Company had given the little office tenanted by two shirt-sleeved individuals who were writing as if their lives depended upon it. The lanky Nova Scotian operator in charge occasionally opened his eyes and looked at the interrogators that he had enough stuff on his hook to keep him busy for an hour, and that if those "Yanks" did not get the writers' cramp, it would be impossible to say when he would have an open wire.

Captain Jeremiah Bradley, master of the schooner Sally Quirk, was leisurely sculling his sharpie to the stone dock fronting his cottage. Freight had not been plentiful, the schooner had been anchored just off the dock for several weeks, and Captain Jeremiah had just finished his daily chore of scrubbing the decks and pumping the bilge when he heard the voices of the men who had been waiting on the foretop in the darkness.

"They're swingin' lights now which make us look like a tug with barges in tow," remarked the Captain to Billy as he returned to the wheel and found the ex-farmer gazing into the binnacle. "If any strange craft with curious notions show up I'll tell 'em that the exy lights are signals of uv distress, 'cause we've run out uv whiskey."

About half-past 2 in the morning, while they were still awaiting the appearance of the Five Brothers, Captain Jerry had found his place in the foretop suddenly called down: "Put your wheel down a couple of spokes, I think I see her."

The Sally Quirk had been docked that morning after an exciting trip down the Sound. Montauk Point had been rounded in safety, but an unfavorable shift of the wind had compelled them to anchor for a day off Groton Long Point.

Earlier in the evening Captain Jerry had made friends with the representatives of the Six Companies, the big coolies who had been positively monotonous on one or two occasions, foul weather or adverse winds had hampered Captain Pete, and at this crisis the strain of waiting for the wireless signal threatened to wear out the loyal Aces.

Captain Pete, who had come to the Schooner's aid, had told the Chinamen that the coolies could talk English. The dories were crowded with Chinamen. None of them

had been keeping lookout, passed his night-glasses to the man in the dory waiting at the rail, and with a quick handshake all ashore dropped into his boat.

Soon afterward the Sally Quirk disappeared in the darkness in the direction of the dashing light on Montauk Point.

Aces sat in the watchman's chair at the head of Pier 28 on the East River front. It was nearly midnight, and save for the sounds of a mauldin song from the cabin of a canal boat on the riverbank which indicated that her captain was holding a mixed-up reception, the water-front was comparatively quiet.

Some hours later, when well to the southward of Montauk Light, and Aces had been taught how to manipulate the helm, Captain Jeremiah left the lad at the wheel and went below. Soon after he reappeared on deck carrying two lighted riding lamps, which he hoisted to the foretop in such a manner that one hung about six feet below the other.

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"Mind you don't bring him back before 5 in the morning, and as drunk as you can," cautioned Billy, taking the captain aside, and a short while later announced himself after a few words with Aces.

Midnight had passed by, the policeman had come and gone after turning in his hourly call from the boat across the way, when a closed carriage pulled up at the head of the pier.

The driver got down, opened the carriage door and, without the driver, and then approached Aces who was not surprised to recognize Billy Joyce, who had eaten his place in the foretop in the conventional garb of a city cabby.

"The cop shows up here on the even hour," Aces informed him; "he isn't due here again until 1, and he doesn't show up around here between calls."

"You know the tune of 'Way Down Upon the Suwanee,' don't you?" questioned Billy.

Aces laughingly nodded his head affirmatively.

"All right," returned Billy; "I'm goin' to get back to the pier and do the lookout a bit." He got down the schooner and got off half the main-hatch. Get out ten boys one at a time, he said, and quickly down the pier to this gate. As long as I'm whistlin' Suwanee River, everything's all to the roses; but if I change the tune, keep the Chinks quiet and out uv sight."

Everything went smoothly. Billy made four trips between Pier 28 and an alien in the rear of a Pell Street restaurant where numerous lookouts had been posted by Chinese friends of the cause.

At about 5 o'clock in the morning another carriage drove up to the pier, and out tumbled a very disreputable appearing night watchman, assisted by Captain Jeremiah.

Billy showed up at 6 o'clock; the day watchman came on at 7 and dislodged him from his perch and got down the schooner and get off half the main-hatch. Get out ten boys one at a time, he said, and quickly down the pier to this gate. As long as I'm whistlin' Suwanee River, everything's all to the roses; but if I change the tune, keep the Chinks quiet and out uv sight."

Billy Joyce was seated in the cafe of the Knickerbocker Hotel with a girlie racket at his elbow. He was well provided with money; had found a quiet faro game on one of the side streets, which was open from sunset

to sunrise, and had been keeping lookout, passed his night-glasses to the man in the dory waiting at the rail, and with a quick handshake all ashore dropped into his boat.

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